



# Accessibility Policy under the Equality Act 2010

*This policy has been approved by the Board of Trustees with reference to the academy's Equality Policy. The aims of the Equality Policy are to ensure that Plume Academy meets the needs of all, taking account of gender, gender identity, ethnicity, culture, religion, language, sexual orientation, age, ability, disability and social circumstances. It is important that in this academy we meet the diverse needs of students to ensure inclusion for all and that all students are prepared for full participation in a multi-ethnic society.*

**Approved by:**

**Board of Trustees**

**Date: May 2021**

**Last reviewed on:**

**May 2021**

**Date of next review due:**

**May 2024**

## **Description and background**

The Plume Academy was originally built in 1907. The academy was extended around 1960 to provide Science Block, Design & Technology and Sports Facilities. Further additional buildings were added around 1970 to provide the Sorrell, Parker and Crowther Blocks. Plume is a split site academy with Years 7 and 8 students based at Mill Road Campus (MRC) and Years 9 to 13 are based at Fambridge Road Campus (FRC). The external walls are mainly of brickwork with Parker, Crowther and Sorrell being of steel frame construction with external cladding. The internal walls to this area are of plasterboard construction. The internal walls at MRC are mainly solid walls. The building at FRC is constructed on a sloping site which necessitates the use of multiple steps and slopes throughout the building. Where possible lifts (chair & personnel) are installed to enable access to all areas.

The academy has a continuing programme of development, improvement and extension.

### **1. Legislative Framework**

- 1.1. The Equality Act 2010 (EA), updated June 2015. Its main purpose was to harmonise Discrimination Law and support progress on equality. Nine separate pieces of legislation have now been brought together into a single Act.
- 1.2. The Legislation places duties on employers and those who provide goods, facilities and services not to unjustifiably discriminate against disabled people in the way they provide employment or services and for any reason that relates to a person's disability.
- 1.3. Employers are not to unjustifiably treat disabled people less favourable than others for a reason relating to their disability and are to make reasonable adjustments to assist disabled employees or applicants for employment.
- 1.4. The Equality Act 2010 (EA) is broken down into thirteen parts. This policy concentrates on the following sections: Part 3 Service Provision; Part 5 Employment; Part 6 Education. The EA is not descriptive as to how an obligation is met. This depends on many factors.
- 1.5. An employer has certain duties under these sections of the Act as detailed above. This policy specifically deals with these areas of the Act that relate to discrimination against disabled people in relation to the provision of goods, facilities and services.
- 1.6. Increasingly provisions should be considered anticipatory with the aim that at some point all buildings will be considered reasonably accessible to all users and their needs.
- 1.7. The Equality and Human Rights Commission publish Codes of Practice on interpretation. Whilst these are not in themselves a legal document they would be considered a benchmark within a legal context.

## 2. **Public Sector Equality Duty**

- 2.1. We have duties as a Public establishment under the 'Equality Act 2010: Public Sector Equality Duty'. The Duty aims to ensure "that all public bodies play their part in making society fairer by tackling discrimination and providing equality of opportunity for all".
- 2.2. The Duty has three main aims and requires public bodies to have 'due regard' to:
  - i. eliminate un-lawful discrimination
  - ii. advance equality of opportunity
  - iii. foster good relationships.
- 2.3. Having 'due regard' generally means thinking about the three aims detailed above as part of the process of decision making.

## 3. **Criteria for Assessment**

- 3.1. The criteria for assessment are:
  - the need to maximise access to and use of the building and facilities for members of the public and staff
  - practical consideration of access improvements.

## 4. **Disclaimer**

- 4.1. This policy has been prepared with reference to a view of current best practice. These views are subject to change. As the EA is not compliance based, adherence to the advice contained in this policy cannot ensure compliance with the EA or immunity from a challenge under the Act.
- 4.2. This policy considers general need and not specific needs of individuals.

## 5. **Explanation of Priorities**

- 5.1. The following priorities are adopted within the policy:

Short term: Where considered immediate priority to meet EA duties, and also to apply good practice, where easy to implement within current resources.

Medium term: Where adjustment may be appropriate as part of proposed refurbishment plans.

Long term: Items which are considered to be beyond the scope of refurbishment.

## 6. **Factors Contributing to Accessibility**

- 6.1. There are numerous factors contributing to accessibility, the most obvious being the physical environment, including fixtures, fittings, furniture and equipment.

- 6.2. It is also important however, to consider management policies and procedures which affect how a building will be used.
- 6.3. Appropriate awareness and attitudes of staff need to be developed if a safe and convenient use of the building and delivery of service is to be preserved.
- 6.4. For these reasons it is critical to consider staff training and management procedures as well as physical improvements to the building.

## 7. **Means of Escape (Fire)**

- 7.1. Means of escape for disabled persons, including the fire alarm system and management procedures for evacuation were not reviewed as part of this Audit. These are covered by a separate Fire Risk Assessment and within the Plume Academy Emergency plan (PEAP). However, the following points should be noted.
- 7.2. A truly accessible building is one which people not only enter and use safely and conveniently but which they can leave safely in the event of an emergency. Safe access is totally dependent on safe egress and safe egress is of necessity planned egress. In general, two separate strategies are required for businesses and staff:
  - i. The individual needs of staff and students can be assessed in advance, agreed with them and personal emergency escape plans (PEEPs) devised for all members of staff and students requiring assistance.
  - ii. The needs of visitors are not necessarily known and often their total knowledge of a building is the route by which they entered. As opposed to personal plans, an overall strategy is needed to allow visitors to escape from the building or, at least, to a place of relative safety or refuge, where assistance is needed or not. Specific measures to meet the needs of disabled people may include alterations to an alarm system by introducing, for example, flashing lights, and by the designation of appropriate refuge areas.

## 8. **Monitoring arrangements**

This document will be reviewed every three years, but may be reviewed and updated more frequently if necessary.